



22 MAY, 2023

## Birth risks reduced

Herald Sun, Melbourne



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## Early inductions help mums, bubs

### EXCLUSIVE

**Sarah Booth**

Early elective inductions may be the safest option for some pregnant women, after surprising new research found mothers who were induced at 39 weeks were less likely to suffer severe injuries.

The Melbourne University study analysed data on more than 1.6 million women from 14 studies.

They found an elective 39 week induction led to better results for mothers than a “watch and wait approach”, when women gave birth – via spontaneous labour, induction or caesarean – 40 weeks or later.

An induction is when clinicians intentionally “kickstart” labour.

The risk of serious perineal injury – which can require surgery and take months to heal – was reduced by 37 per cent, while births involving forceps or vacuum extraction were also less likely.

Project co-lead Roxanne Hastie said research had already shown early inductions – used in more than 40 per cent of labours in Australia – were safe for babies.

“But is it better for mum? This study is the first to confirm that inducing labour seems to protect mums,” she said.

She said the injuries analysed in their study – third or fourth degree tears – cause “physical and mental trauma” and can have “lasting effects”.

“Third or fourth degree

tears (are) ... pretty significant injuries to the perineum,” she said.

Dr Hastie said the study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Network Open, also confirmed a previous finding: that inductions among first-time mums lower the risk of emergency caesarean.

“We also found their babies were less likely to require admission to the neonatal inten-

sive care unit ... and less likely for emergency fever,” she said.

But they also found cases of shoulder dystopia – when the babies’ shoulders are stuck – increased among first-time mothers, meaning an early elective induction may not always be the best option for these women.

Dr Hastie said women previously needed a medical reason to be induced early, but this has started to change.

She said women should be allowed to make their own decisions with their doctors – weighing up the risks and their own situations.

“We’re just trying to provide the right evidence for women so they can make informed decisions about their health, not saying one works better or the other, but so you can have the option to make that decision yourself,” she said.

Melbourne mum Shani Martin, who was induced early for both Sasha, 1, and Aria, 5, said it was important that women make an “evidence-

based informative decision”.

“[My doctor] went through the pros and cons of being induced,” she said.

“It was a pretty smooth labour once the induction started and there was only minimal instrument use. It’s definitely important just having all the information available.”

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NEWS 03

Shani Martin was induced early for the births of daughters Sasha, now 1, and Aria, now 5. Picture: Jake Nowakowski

